

The Forms and Effects of Pastoral Prayer

I. JAMES 5:13-16

¹³ Is any of you sad? Let him *pray*.

Is he cheerful in mind? Let him *sing*.

¹⁴ Is any man sick among you?

Let him bring in the Priests of The Church,
and let them *pray* over him,

anointing him with oil in The Name of The Lord.

¹⁵ And The *Prayer* of Faith shall save the sick man:

and The Lord shall raise him up:

and if he be in sins, they shall be *forgiven* him.

¹⁶ *Confess* therefore your sins one to another:
and *pray* one for another, that you may be saved.

For the continual *prayer* of a just man availeth much. ¹

¹ 1, DRA, JAMES 5:13-16.

II. Saint James a Man of Prayer

Saint James, the human author of The Book of JAMES,² was one of the 12 Apostles of The Lord,³ known as James The Less, son of Alphaeus.⁴ He was the head of the early Jewish Church in Jerusalem⁵ before the destruction of The Second Temple by the Romans in 68 to 70 AD.⁶

With Peter and John, James was present at the raising of Jarius' daughter from the dead,⁷ The Transfiguration of CHRIST⁸ and JESUS' Agony in The Garden.⁹¹⁰ Saint Paul refers to him as a "Pillar" of The Church to whose authority he submitted.¹¹

² 2, Matthew Henry Notes, Book of JAMES. "The writer of This Epistle was not James the son of Zebedee; for he was put to death by Herod (ACTS 12) before Christianity had gained so much ground among the Jews of the dispersion as is here implied. But it was the other James, the son of Alphaeus, who was cousin... to CHRIST, and One of The Twelve Apostles, MATTHEW 10:3."

³ 1, DRA, MATTHEW 10:2-4, "And the names of The Twelve Apostles are these: The first, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the publican, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him."

⁴ 3, Strong's Data, 2385 – "Iakobos," meaning "Supplanter" 1) son of Zebedee, an Apostle and brother of The Apostle John, commonly called James the Greater or Elder, slain by Herod, ACTS 12. 2) An Apostle, son of Alphaeus, called The Less 3) James the half-brother of CHRIST 4) an unknown James, [possibly] father of The Apostle Judas.

⁵ 4, Fausset's Bible Dictionary, "Apostles," 1839.07.

⁶ 4, Fausset's Bible Dictionary, 1947.30-31. "Temple."

⁷ 1, DRA, MARK 5:35-43.

⁸ 1, DRA, MATTHEW 17:1-8.

⁹ 1, DRA, MATTHEW 26:37-47.

¹⁰ 4, Fausset's Bible Dictionary, "Apostles," 1839.02.

Matthew Henry comments that Saint James "...was called The Just, for his great piety. He was an eminent example of Those Graces which he... [poured out] upon others."¹² Tradition holds that Saint James was martyred in Jerusalem,¹³ probably in about 62 AD.¹⁴

"He was so exceedingly revered for his justice, temperance, and devotion, that Josephus the Jewish historian records... [his martyrdom] as one of the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem" by the Romans as Divine Punishment.¹⁵ And he was a man of GOD who knew about prayer and how to apply it!

¹¹ 1, DRA, GALATIANS 2:9, "And when they had known The Grace that was given to me, James and Cephas [i.e., Peter] and John, who seemed to be Pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship: that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the Circumcision:"

¹² 4, Fausset's Bible Dictionary, 1947.30-31. "Temple." The armies of the Roman General Titus, answering to Emperor Vespasian, destroyed Jerusalem and The Second Temple of Zerubbabel in 70 AD. "...The period of bombarding The Temple is named by the Jews 'The Days of Wretchedness.' On the 28th of June the daily 'sacrifice ceased' (DANIEL 9:27) from want of an officiating Priest, and Titus again in vain invited to a surrender. On July 15th a soldier, contrary to Titus' intention, fired The Temple, and all Titus' efforts to stop the fire were unavailing, the very same month and day that Nebuchadnezzar burnt The First Temple [of Solomon], GOD marking the judgment plainly as from Him. Titus himself recognized this: 'we fought with GOD on our side, it is GOD Who pulled the Jews out of these strongholds, for what could the hands of men or machines have availed against these towers?'..."

¹³ 2, Matthew Henry Notes, Book of JAMES.

¹⁴ 4, Fausset's Bible Dictionary, "Apostles," 1839.09.

¹⁵ 4, Fausset's Bible Dictionary, 1947.30-31. "Temple."

III. Prayer in Pastoral Care

After being with people in pastoral presence, prayer is probably the second most frequent thing I offer to people as a Chaplain. So as I read JAMES 5 on prayer, I find myself asking this question: How to most effectively offer the gift of prayer in ministry for the support of hurting souls?

I believe this about prayer: 1.) I should not force prayer on others, but rather offer it in sensitivity and respect. 2.) I should not presume that those I care for have the same Faith Tradition and Faith life that I do. 3.) I can not take for granted that those I offer pastoral care to pray as I do.

4.) I should not pray with others to first meet my needs, but to first meet the needs of those I am caring for. 5.) I can join others in prayer as long as I remain true to my own Faith convictions. 6.) I can pray for and with others in actions as well as in words. 7) Pastoral presence, in and of itself, is a form of prayer.

I work to apply prayer in this way: 1.) I offer prayer with others only with permission. 2.) I try to listen for what the Faith Tradition of others is during the course of my pastoral care. 3.) I try to be sensitive to the prayer needs of those I am caring for and form my prayers around them. 4.) I often do most or all of the prayer work as needed, but when desired, I draw back to empower those in my care to pray out loud or silently as they wish.

5.) I pray with others authentically, being able to join others in prayer when there is a common Faith conviction between us of The Creator GOD, but am not able to pray with people of all faiths. 6.) My outward spoken prayer is not necessary in every visit. Offering pastoral presence, listening and attentiveness itself is an act of prayer for and with others.

IV. Affirming the Song of a Soul with a Prayer

CD is a 28 year old lady I saw in the ER on 8/23/2009 in the early AM. She shared her blood sugar was again very high. She was reading a romance novel. She put her book down and closed her eyes. After a few minutes I said, "It seems like it's difficult for you to talk now." She affirmed this. As I gave her my card I said, "I wonder if you would like me to say a short prayer for you?"

She opened her eyes and said that she wanted me to pray with her. I asked what she would like prayer for. At this the visit re-began. She shared about being a single Mom. She shared about her daily battle with diabetes.

She shared about the romance novel and how that probably would never be her. She shared about her below-the-knee amputation and giving up on using her prosthesis. She shared about her Faith life. She shared her isolation, loneliness and discouragement. Only then did I offered her my hand and we prayed.

Our prayer summed up CD's story and struggles. It was offered as a gift with humility and with her permission. The prayer was formed to give Mrs. D the knowledge that I had attentively heard what she shared and, more importantly, that her story was heard by GOD through her sharing and our prayer together. The prayer brought release of spiritual burden as her story was lifted up as song, petition, confession, forgiveness and greater peace. For the fervent and heartfelt prayer of this day for both of us availed much for a hurting soul.

V. A Prayer

Let us come together before The LORD
Each according to our own Tradition.

The LORD be with you!
And also with you!

[silence]

O GOD, as we go forth today
in Your Name to care for those in need,
help us to carefully consider and apply
the voice of prayer in words and deeds
with and on behalf of others
and for ourselves
with humble and careful hearts.
AMEN.

Let us go forth to love and serve The LORD!
Thanks be to GOD!

VI. References

1. “Douay Rheims American Edition (1899)” Bible. Bible Works 7. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2006.
2. “Matthew Henry Notes.” Bible Works 7. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2006.
3. “Strong’s Data.” Bible Works 7. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2006.
4. “Fausset’s Bible Dictionary.” Bible Works 7. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2006.